

Administration of Barack Obama, 2012

Remarks Following a Tour of Areas Damaged by Wildfires in Colorado Springs, Colorado

June 29, 2012

Well, we just had a chance to tour some of the damage that's been done by this devastating fire. I've had a chance to thank Mayor Bach, as well as Governor Hickenlooper, and the entire congressional delegation; members of the fire service, the Forest Service, as well as local fire officials have gotten a full briefing.

I think what you see here is an example of outstanding coordination and cooperation between Federal, State, and local agencies. We have been putting everything we have into trying to deal with what's one of the worst fires that we've seen here in Colorado. And it's still early in the fire season, and we still got a lot more work to do. But because of the outstanding work that's been done, because of not only the coordination, but also some unprecedented arrangements that have been made with military resources combined with the civil resources, we're starting to see progress.

Obviously, as you saw in some of these subdivisions, the devastation is enormous. And our thoughts and prayers go out to all the families who have been affected.

One of the things that I've tried to emphasize is that whether it's fires in Colorado or flooding in the northern parts of Florida, when natural disasters like this hit, America comes together. And we all recognize that there, but for the grace of God, go I. We've got to make sure that we have each other's backs. And that spirit is what you're seeing in terms of volunteers, in terms of firefighters, in terms of Government officials. Everybody is pulling together to try to deal with this situation.

Now, as I said, we're not completely out of the woods yet. These folks, some of them have been working 18-hour days, 20-hour days, trying to make sure that these fires get put out. They're going to be carefully monitoring the situation; ultimately, they're going to need a little bit of help from Mother Nature in order to fully extinguish these fires.

In the meantime, some lessons are being learned about how we can mitigate some of these fires in the future, and I know that the mayor and Governor and other local officials are already in those conversations. It means that, hopefully, out of this tragedy, some long-term planning occurs, and it may be that we can curb some of the damage that happens the next time, even though you obviously can't fully control fires that are starting up in these mountains.

Last point I just want to make, and that is that we can provide all the resources, we can make sure that they're well coordinated, but as I just told these firefighters, what we can't do is to provide them with the courage and the determination and the professionalism, the heart that they show when they're out there battling these fires.

When we had a chance on site to see some guys who had just saved three homes in a community that had been devastated, for those families, the work and the sacrifice of those firefighters means the world to them, and they are genuine heroes.

And so we want to just say thank you to all the folks who have been involved in this. We're proud of you. We appreciate what you do each and every day. And so for folks all around the country, I hope you are reminded of how important our fire departments are, our Forest

Service is. Sometimes they don't get the credit that they deserve until your house is burning down, or your community is being threatened. And you have to understand they're putting their lives at risk to save us and to help us. We've got to make sure that we remember that 365 days a year, not just when tragedies like this strike.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:35 p.m. at Fire Station 9.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Wildfires in Colorado Springs, CO, tour of damage.

Locations: Colorado Springs, CO.

Names: Bach, Stephen G.; Hickenlooper, John W.

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